

Message Text

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: UR, VN, CB, MOPS, PBOR, CH
SUBJECT: SRV-KHMER CONFLICT PRESENTS BENEFITS AND
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FOR MOSCOW

REF: (A) MOSCOW 2387, (B) BANGKOK 6745

SUMMARY: SOVIETS ECHO TOUGHENING VIETNAMESE STANCE TOWARD
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KAMPUCHEA AND CONTINUE TO DENOUNCE ALLEGED CHINESE ROLE
IN SRV-KHMER CONFLICT. AN INFLUENTIAL, IF UNOFFICIAL,
SOVIET SOURCE DECLARED THAT MOSCOW "WOULD NOT TOLERATE
A DECISIVE BLOW AGAINST VIETNAM." SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL
STATES CLASHES OCCURRING ON SRV-PRC BORDER, ALLEGES PEKING
IS ATTEMPTING TO PRESSURE VIETNAM FROM THE NORTH AND
SOUTH, AND HOLDS THAT VIETNAMESE WILL NOT MARCH ON PHNOM

PENH. WE BELIEVE SOVIETS, WHILE BENEFITING FROM CONFLICT'S EFFECTS ON SOVIET-VIETNAMESE AND SINO-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS, ARE ADVISING VIETNAMESE AGAINST MARCHING ON PHNOM PENH. END SUMMARY.

1. SOVIET MEDIA IS REPEATING AND SUPPORTING TOUGHENING VIETNAMESE LINE TOWARD KAMPUCHEA. PRAVDA FEB. 26 REPLAYED NHAN DAN FEB. 25 EDITORIAL ALLEGING CONTINUING KHMER ARMED RAIDS INTO VIETNAMESE TERRITORY AND DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN KHMER PUBLIC AND PHNOM PENH AUTHORITIES, WHICH IT CRITICIZED FOR FOLLOWING "ADVENTURISTIC OBJECTIVES." FEB. 28 TASS ARTICLE DATED LINE PARIS SEIZES ON AFP INTERVIEW OF ALLEGED KHMER PRISONERS CAPTURED BY VIETNAMESE. TASS ARTICLE QUOTES PRISONERS AS STATING THAT "BROAD MOBILIZATION" OF KHMER FORCES IS UNDERWAY IN KAMPUCHEA; THAT CHINESE HAVE STOCKED KHMER MILITARY ARMORY; AND THAT KHMER TROOPS HAVE BEEN ORDERED "TO PLUNDER, BURN, KILL AND DESTROY EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE IN VIETNAMESE TERRITORY." MARCH 2 PRAVDA CARRIED REPORT OF RADIO VIETNAM DENOUNCING CONTINUING MILITARY PROVOCATIONS BY KHMER REGIME.

2. SOVIETS IN PRIVATE ARE ALSO TAKING A TOUGHER LINE, TALKING ABOUT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT LESS WHILE SHARPLY CRITICIZING THE POL POT REGIME AND THE CHINESE. AN INFLUENTIAL BUT UNOFFICIAL SOVIET, FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE SOVIET COMMITTEE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH ASIAN AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES, A. S. DZASOKHAV, STRONGLY CONDEMNED

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PEKING'S POLICY TOWARD THE WAR DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR (MEMCON POUCHED). HE DECLARED THAT THE SOVIET UNION "WOULD NOT TOLERATE A DECISIVE BLOW AGAINST VIETNAM."

3. THE EXPANSIVE CHIEF, MFA'S FIRST FAR EASTERN DEPARTMENT, M. S. KAPITSA, TOLD AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR MARCH 2 THAT CHINESE ARE "ANGRY" BECAUSE THE VIETNAMESE ARE FRUSTRATING CHINESE AMBITIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. KAPITSA CHARGED THAT PEKING'S OBJECTIVE IS TO PRESSURE VIETNAM FROM THE NORTH AND FROM THE SOUTH, AND THAT CHINESE CREWS ARE MANNING CHINESE-MADE LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY FOR THE KHMERS AS WELL AS PROVIDING OTHER FORMS OF MILITARY-TECHNOLOGICAL BACKING WHICH THE KHMERS NEED BUT CANNOT GET FROM THEIR OWN RESOURCES. HE CLAIMED THE LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY FIRING INTO VIETNAM IS LOCATED IN WELL PROTECTED AREAS INSIDE KAMPUCHEA TO PROTECT THE CHINESE CREWS FROM CAPTURE. KAPITSA ALSO STATED THAT THE CHINESE HAVE RECENTLY PROVOKED CLASHES ON THE SRV-PRC BORDER.

4. KAPITSA STATED FURTHER THAT THE CHINESE RESENT VIETNAMESE TREATMENT OF THE CHINESE MINORITY IN SOUTHERN

VIETNAM. BEFORE MAO'S DEATH, HE HELD, THERE WAS A HEATED EXCHANGE BETWEEN MAO AND LE DUAN ON THIS ISSUE. KAPITSA SAID THAT THE SRV PURSUES "CLASS-BASED POLICIES" THAT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE INTERESTS OF THE ESSENTIALLY BOURGEOIS CHINESE MINORITY. LE DUAN BLUNTLY TOLD MAO THAT HANOI WOULD NOT CONSULT WITH THE CHINESE OR ANYONE ELSE ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF CHINESE IN VIETNAM.

5. SWITCHING TO THE KHMER-VIETNAMESE CONFLICT ITSELF, KAPITSA CLAIMED THAT, UNLIKE THE VIETNAMESE WHO IN 1954 WERE READY TO ACCEPT THE FRENCH BOUNDARIES, CAMBODIA AT

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THAT TIME INSISTED ON ALTERING THEM TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF AREAS WITH "MIXED POPULATION." SINCE SEPTEMBER, 1975, HE STATED, KHMER TROOPS HAVE INVADDED VIETNAMESE TERRITORY AND PERPETRATED MASSACRES. IN NOVEMBER, VIETNAM RETALIATED, KILLING 40,000 (SIC) KHMER TROOPS AND DESTROYED KHMER "BASE AREAS." ON JAN. 6, THE VIETNAMESE

WITHDREW BUT STILL CONTINUE PERIODICALLY TO ENTER KHMER TERRITORY TO ENGAGE KHMER TROOP CONCENTRATIONS. KAPITSA PREDICTED THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARMY WOULD NOT MARCH ON PHNOM PENH, OBSERVING THAT "THIS TYPE OF THING IS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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DONE THESE DAYS." HOWEVER, HANOI WOULD WORK "TO ENDORSE AN INTERNAL EVOLUTION" INSIDE KAMPUCHEA THROUGH ADOPTION OF A "FIRM STAND" TOWARD PHNOM PENH'S WAYWARDNESS. KAPITSA SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE KHMER LEADERSHIP WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS "TRAINED TO HATE EVERYBODY." KAPITSA CONCLUDED BY RERUNNING A LENGTHY LECTURE PRESENTED EARLIER TO THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR, CHARGING THAT THE POL POT REGIME IS GUILTY OF DESTROYING CITIES AND TOWNS (WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS THE "TRANSMISSION BELTS" OF CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION), AND WITH LIQUIDATING ALL EDUCATED PEOPLE DOWN TO PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS. 6. COMMENT: AS REPORTED REFTELS, MOSCOW SEES THE KHMER-VIETNAMESE BORDER CONFLICT AS PRESENTING BOTH FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS. THE SOVIETS CAN USE THE CONFLICT TO INGRATiate THEMSELVES WITH HANOI THROUGH POLITICAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT IN A TIME OF VIETNAMESE NEED. THEY CAN ALSO USE THE CONFLICT TO

EXACERBATE SINO-VIETNAMESE "CONTRADICTIONS." BUT MOSCOW'S "CATBIRD" SEAT WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY A VIETNAMESE DECISION TO MOVE ON PHNOM PENH IN AN OPEN BID TO OVERTHROW THE PRO-CHINESE POL POT REGIME, A MOVE KAPITSA RULED OUT, BUT ONE WHICH WE THINK (AS EVIDENCED BY SOVIET COMMENT, PARA 2) MOSCOW MUST BE CONSIDERING AS A POSSIBILITY. A MARCH BY THE VIETNAMESE ARMY UP THE MEKONG TO PHNOM PENH WOULD BE EMBARRASSING FOR THE SOVIETS AT A TIME WHEN MOSCOW IS EMPHASIZING ITS "PRINCIPLED POSITION" ON NON-VIOLABILITY OF FRONTIERS IN THE HORN. PERHAPS JUST AS SIGNIFICANT, THE SOVIETS WOULD BE CONCERNED THAT A STRONG CHINESE REACTION COULD MOVE ITS S.E.A. "PARTNER" TO TURN TO MOSCOW FOR SOMETHING MORE THAN CONTINUING VERBAL SUPPORT. SUCH A CHAIN OF EVENTS WOULD PRESENT SOVIET POLICY MAKERS WITH SOME UNPLEASANT CONFIDENTIAL

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DECISIONS OVER THE RELATIVE ADVANTAGES OF (A) OPENLY AIDING HANOI IN BRASHLY PURSUING ITS MILITARY-POLITICAL AIMS IN KAMPUCHEA OR (B) PREVENTING A MORE DIFFICULT OR EVEN DANGEROUS SITUATION TO DEVELOP IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS.

7. IN SHORT, MOSCOW GREATLY VALUES ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH HANOI, AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE PROVIDING IT WITH PROPAGANDA/POLITICAL SUPPORT. AT THE SAME TIME, THE SOVIETS PROBABLY WOULD NOT WELCOME A SHARP INTENSIFICATION OF SINO-SOVIET FRICTION WHICH COULD GROW OUT OF AN EXPANDING KHMER-VIETNAMESE BORDER CONFLICT. WE BELIEVE THAT KAPITSA WAS PROBABLY EXPRESSING A HOPE RATHER THAN A CONVICTION WHEN HE STATED THAT THE VIETNAMESE WOULD NOT MARCH ON PHNOM PENH. AS POSSIBLE, MOSCOW WILL ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN THE ADVANTAGES IT DERIVES FROM THE PRESENT SITUATION, INCLUDING CLOSER TIES WITH VIETNAM (FURTHER ILLUSTRATED BY RECENT INDICATIONS THAT SOVIETS AND VIETNAMESE WILL JOINTLY REVAMP LAO ARMY), AND STRAINED SINO-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT, AS OPPORTUNITY PERMITS, THE SOVIETS WILL ADVISE THE VIETNAMESE AGAINST STRIKING OUT FOR PHNOM PENH WHILE TOTALLY SUPPORTING HANOI'S MILITARY EFFORTS TO PUMMEL THE KHMER ARMY, TO UNDERMINE THE POL POT REGIME, AND TO POSE AS THE "VICTIM" OF KHMER AGGRESSION INTERNATIONALLY.

8. WE WOULD NOT WANT TO DISPUTE FROM HERE BANGKOK'S REF B ASSESSMENT THAT AN ATTEMPTED VIETNAMESE MILITARY TAKEOVER OF PHNOM PENH IS MOST UNLIKELY. AT THE SAME TIME WE WOULD WELCOME USLO PEKING'S AND HONG KONG'S ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE PRC REACTION IF THE VIETNAMESE SHOULD DO SO, SINCE THIS COULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS.

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9. THE INFORMATION ON KAPITSA'S MEETING WITH THE AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR WAS GIVEN TO US IN CONFIDENCE BY THE AUSTRALIAN DCM, WHO SAT IN ON THE MEETING AS NOTETAKER. THE LATTER ASKS THAT THIS INFORMATION BE KEPT IN U.S. CHANNELS SINCE HIS AMBASSADOR HAS DECIDED TO DEFER REPORTING UNTIL HE RETURNS FROM A TRIP. TOON

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